

Unexplained...

## Haunts and Howls in Hoosierland

by Gary E. Monday

Tom Champion, a retired fireman, is presently the President of the Retired Police and Firemen's Association (Terre Haute Chapter) and Curator of Historical Fire Station #9 Museum, is also quite knowledgeable about Vigo County history. Tom recently related some facts about one of the better known haunted houses in the area.

Some years ago a wealthy farmer and seller of race horses had a large farm across from the old Glenn Home. His name was Paul Kuhn. The house was a rambling two-story, grey home and was not visible from U.S. 40 during the summer months because of heavy foliage. It could be seen, however, during the winter months through barren trees.

Mr. Kuhn died in Indianapolis and his widow passed away some time later in a local health-care facility. The Kuhn farm became legendary to local people as a place where strange noises, eerie shadows and unexplained events took place.

The story became so widespread that a few brave youths decided to do away with the place near Halloween and burned it to the ground. The creaking sounds and whatever ghosts were present died in the ashes...but not in the memory of older folks who recall that mystery surrounding Kuhn's ghostly farm.

You can be assured that the

Wabash Valley doesn't hold exclusive rights on strange happenings. If you've ever heard the wailing cry of a mountain lion late at night, it's a sound you'll never forget. Not only is it a mournful cry, but, believe it or not, it sounds very much like a woman screaming! The Screaming Woman of Devil's Backbone is listed in the book "Mysterious America." I have heard the sound and it makes for a bone-chilling thrill, to say the least.

Southeast of Bedford, Indiana, near the town of Tunnelton, there is a high, tricky ridge-road which is very scary after dark—even without ghosts! A woman's screams can be heard piercing the night air. No one can explain where the sound comes from or why. But, it happens. Hoosier Conservation officers say, "There are no longer any mountain lions in the area." So it remains a mystery.

There are always skeptics. Yet, the fascination of the unexplained continues to tweak our thoughts. For every skeptic there are hundreds of believers. You have to sort out the facts for yourself. Somewhat like the story of a circuit-riding preacher of yesteryear, galloping through the woodlands of Kentucky. He was stopped by four young people. One of the young men spoke up. "Reverend, we been a huntin' you for hours. We wanta

git married."

"I'm late now. I don't have time to go back to the church," the man of the cloth replied.

"Well then, marry us right here," the youth urged. So, the preacher took out his bible, ran through a hasty ceremony and prepared to continue his journey. One of the young men spoke up quickly saying, "HEY—you married the wrong couple!"

"Shaw," said the circuit-rider, "I married you ALL. You can separate yourselves."

By the way, Indiana is, in case you didn't know, the birthplace of the man called America's first train-robber, the infamous Old West outlaw. Sam Bass! And that, of course, brings to my mind another mystery.

The early thirties was a time when every newspaper in the country headlined the latest capers of one John Dillinger of Mooresville, Indiana. Was he the one shot leaving the Biograph Theatre that day 50 years ago in Chicago? Was it someone else? Why did his sister gasp as they opened his coffin, and turned to her father, saying, "Dad, you know as well as I do....that IS NOT John!"

In very recent times new facts have come forth about the John Dillinger saga that really raises the question...was it John Dillinger they gunned down?



# Frightening Folklore

Folklore  
(wv)

## Legends of supernatural happenings haunt Terre Haute and Indiana State

Indiana Statesman 8/25/99

By Katy J. Vopal  
Indiana Statesman

Some of the most popular legends that surround Terre Haute involve the supernatural. Ghosts, the voice of a moaning woman, faces in a brick wall, a hundred steps into an old cemetery and a faceless nun are just some legends that have been created in Terre Haute.

There are many different versions of the stories, and the following tales are a compilation of the many versions I've heard in my six years at ISU:

**"Stiffy Green:"** Back in the 1920s, a man named John G. Heintz used to stroll the streets of Terre Haute with his little bulldog, Stiffy Green. The master and his dog were inseparable, for Stiffy would follow Heintz everywhere he went.

The day came that Heintz fell ill and died. He was buried at Highland Lawn Cemetery in his family's mausoleum.

rated from his master. He found his way to the Heintz mausoleum and guarded the door. The family would come and take him home, but he would only run away back to Highland Lawn. Inconsolable, Stiffy died on the mausoleum steps. Mrs. Heintz didn't want to separate Stiffy from her husband, so she had a taxidermist stuff the dog and she placed him inside the mausoleum beside John.

People have heard that at night in Highland lawn, they can hear a dog barking from the Heintz mausoleum. It is said that John and Stiffy still take their walks together, and figures of a man and his dog have been spotted entering the mausoleum...right through the closed and locked doors.

A few years back, vandals broke into the Heintz mausoleum and stole Stiffy Green.

He was finally recovered, and the Heintz family donated him to the Wabash Valley Historical Museum. He is today. Though the body

of Stiffy is there, his spirit is not, for he can still be heard roaming Highland Lawn, eternally faithful to his master.

**"The Faceless Nun:"** At St. Mary-of-the-Woods College many years back, there was a nun who had a gift for art. She was passionate about painting and loved to capture people on canvas.

She believed, however, that the face was the essence of a person, and one could tell everything about them from their face. The face, she said, was the gateway to a person's soul.

Not always liking what she saw in people, she painted the face last. She couldn't concentrate on the canvas if she had to look at the face before she finished the rest.

One day, she decided to paint a portrait of herself. She sat in front of a mirror and began her work, leaving the face for last as always. However, she fell ill and died before finishing her painting, and all that was left to do was her face.

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A few days later, one of the nuns went into the chapel to pray, and she noticed that the only other person in the chapel was one of her fellow sisters, knelt before the altar weeping. She approached the weeping woman, putting a hand on her shoul-

der and asking if there was anything she could do to help. The nun who was weeping looked up. She had no face. The other sister tore from the chapel screaming. She called to several people outside, and when they all came back in, the faceless nun

was gone.

**"Haunted Halls:"** There are many legends surrounding the ghosts of Burford and Jones Halls at ISU. They have many, many origins and many different versions.

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See **Folklore** page **A9**



## Folklore

*continued from page A4*

The ghost of Burford Hall is commonly called "Barfing Barb." Residents of Burford Hall named her because the specter is a young woman who had supposedly once been a resident there. No one is really sure how "Barb" died, though some people have said she died on alcohol poisoning on the floor of the bathroom on the fourth floor. Students today claim to have heard someone retching in the bathroom; however, when they enter it, no one is there.

The elevator ghost of Jones Hall is based on a real-life gruesome incident. One night a group of intoxicated students pried open the door of the even elevator to "elevator surf" on the top.

One of the young men tripped when he jumped on top and fell

between the wall and elevator where he was crushed.

Now, his ghost not only haunts the even elevator, but the eighth

wondered what it would be like to see the future, or talk to the devil, or be told you were going to die? These questions have been answered by

the cemetery. Some say if you climb to the top and turn around on the night of a full moon, the devil will be there to greet you. Others say that

**W**hen they took the key and unlocked the doors . . . they found the phone off the hook.

-- "Mausoleum phone"--

floor where he had lived. A mysterious shadow is often seen darting around the corners of the floors in Jones.

**"The One Hundred Steps"** Ever

people who ran screaming from the old, haunted cemetery, accessed by crumbling "100 steps" located between Terre Haute and Brazil.

There are many tales surrounding

if you climb to the top and yell out a question and turn around to look at the bottom, a specter will appear to tell you the answer. And yet others say if you run up and down the stairs

so it equals 100 (there are only in the vicinity of 30 to 40 stairs) you see a vision of when you are going to die. Still others say the place is haunted period and you will be cursed if go there...and will die a year to the day you have been there.

If that was true, I would have been gone last December.

**"Mausoleum Phone"** There was a man who lived in Terre Haute by the last name of Sheets, and his biggest fear is that he would be buried alive. Plagued by constant nightmares, he imagined being alive and hearing himself pronounced dead and not being able to move...and listening to his own funeral....along with the horrifying snap of the casket lock and the dirt being shoveled on top of him. Only then would he awake, screaming, knowing it was too late.

His nightmares were so frequent, he insisted on having a casket made that he could open from inside, just in case. What good would that do

Sheets if he has six feet of dirt over him? He had a mausoleum made. And then what would happen if he woke up and got out of his casket and was locked inside the mausoleum?

He had a phone installed inside that would be a direct line to his house where he could call his wife. She had the only key to the mausoleum.

Sheets passed away and for many, many years his wife lived alone, guarding the key.

Finally, one day, someone came to her house for they hadn't heard from her in a few days. She was sitting in a chair, dead, with the phone's receiver gripped in her hand. The family had the call traced, and they found that it had come from the Sheets' mausoleum. When they took the key and unlocked the doors....they found the phone off the hook.



# 'Famous Indiana Ghosts' remembered in

TS OCT 28 1984

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The Indiana State Museum is gathering a collection of stories on "Famous Indiana Ghosts." These stories have been received by The Tribune-Star for the collection.

## Early Halloween party at the Markle House

By Dorothy Thompson

In the early thirties my husband and I bought a few pieces of furniture and moved into the old Markle House, built in 1848, at the intersection of the old Rockville Road and Park Avenue in Otter Creek Township, Vigo County. The home is still there and several different families have come and gone with memories that will never be forgotten.

We had a downstairs parlor and kitchen and a bedroom on the second floor. The idea for a Halloween party came from a fat puffed up owl that sat high in a tall tree outside the window. The "hoo-hoo" sounded like "Who? Who?" — to this we added, "Who will come to a party?"

Stray dogs and cats, owls and bats, mice and rats, spiders and chirping crickets, and a variety of bugs were ready for anything. We invited members of our Sunday School class to be our guests.

Much time was spent hanging Japanese lanterns all around the back porch and a number of jack-o'-lanterns would provide extra light. Scarecrows, made from old brooms and discarded clothing, were stationed at the doors as greeters.

Twenty or more friends, carrying platters of food, made an early appearance. We chatted, played a few games, and told ghost stories, while popcorn, in long-handled poppers, was popped in the open fireplace.

Later we placed the huge coffee pot on top of the potbellied stove and announced that we would take a tour of the house and grounds. Aunt Anna Markle opened her door for us to "look-around" and Aunt Sally, who lived upstairs, called to us to come up the big staircase. We went through all the rooms, except one, which was locked. I knew that things that had belonged to Aunt Anna's boy, who had been killed in a bicycle wreck, were still there.

As we started the tour of the grounds, not a soul knew we had hidden two sets of old coil bedsprings and tubes and tires in the cornfield and weed patches. One nervous lady had to use the outside "john" and she almost fainted as our wild cat, called "Tiger," pounced upon her as she opened the door to leave. Many screamed as feet were caught in the coils or as they slipped on the tires and tubes.

When we returned to the house, some were more in the mood for rest than for food. Tempting smells changed their minds. The main dish was never forgotten. We had bought a new commode, commonly called a "slop-jar." It was thoroughly cleaned, filled with apple cider, hot dogs and a little cooked rice to resemble maggots. A few almost refused to fill their cups and reach in for a hot dog, but they soon joined the crowd. All the "goodies" — pumpkin pie, salads, and whatever you can name, were soon gone.

The finale of the evening was a trip to the dark, damp and smelly cellar with its brick walls and floors. Stories had been told that a part of the wall could be removed to enter a tunnel that led to the old Markle Mill, destroyed by fire in 1938. Some brave men wanted to find the opening, but the women cried, "No! No! There might be some dead bodies in there!"

A few who attended the party and are still alive today say they didn't sleep much that night. They kept hearing James Whitcomb Riley mumble, as he pointed his finger at them,

"An' the Gobble-uns 'll git you

Ef you DON'T WATCH OUT!"

## Scott and Annabell

By P. G. Aaron

If you proceed south from the Old National Highway and go past the Hulman Golf course, which is a major landmark in Terre Haute, you will see a country road taking off from your left. This is really a small road of no great consequence which, nevertheless, runs straight like the blade of a knife that slices the surrounding dense jungle into two.

After a stretch of about two miles, the road comes to an abrupt end and the motorist is obliged to take a right or a left turn at this point. Failure to do so will result in the car smashing right into a fence of barbed wire. Quite a few drivers, either in a state of inebriation or as a result of carelessness, have driven their cars up against this barricade and come to grief. I know this since I live only a short distance from this treacherous trap and quite a few men have walked up my driveway and knocked at my door, mostly after midnight, seeking assistance.

Beyond the barricade, one can, with some careful searching, see remnants of an old unused gravel path that leads up the hill and eventually disappears behind a clump of tall pine trees.

It happened about five years ago, and I still remember that Oct. 5 night vividly. We had just recently moved into our home and, along with my family, I was returning home late in the night. It should have been about midnight. The sky was lit like day with a bright new moon. As I drove into our driveway, I caught a glimpse of the barricade ahead and something else. Something I had never seen before. It was a little girl and a boy, standing right in front of the wire fence, holding hands as though they were waiting for someone.

In a fraction of that moment, some particulars registered in my mind. The girl should have been about 12 years, the same age as my daughter, and her brother should have been a couple of years younger. Both were dressed in old fashioned clothes, like the ones you see in old westerns or in movies such as Little House on the Prairie.

By the time I realized these two children were probably lost and were out of place and out of time, the car had travelled some distance. I stopped, backed the car, and drove towards the end of the road. To my utter astonishment, the two children were gone and could not be seen anywhere around. I drove up and down and looked around but couldn't see any stalled car or marooned people. I drove back home and went to bed.

I thought: Maybe there lives someone beyond the fence and up

the hill; maybe my daughter will have some friends to play with. I will explore tomorrow.

The next day was Sunday. It was early October and one could feel that fall was not too far away. After lunch, my daughter and I climbed over the fence and walked up the hill.



There was no indication that the path had been used in a long, long time. There was grass and thistle all over the place, but from the packed gravel under the brush I could see that at one time it must have been a well trodden path, only to fall into disuse in later years.

As we climbed up the hill, it became apparent that the entire area was a thick jungle with no sign of human habitation. No family could possibly live anywhere in that kind of wilderness. My suspicion increased and a sense of suspense began to grip me.

All of a sudden, to our left, there appeared a clearing and almost instantly, I could see a graveyard. The premises of the grave yard were not kept up but I could, through the clearing, see some fresh cut flowers had been placed on two adjoining graves.

My suspense reached almost an unbearable pitch. Driven by curiosity, I moved towards the graves.

Over the years, the elements have taken their toll and dulled the engravings, but still I could read them: Anabelle MacIntosh, Aged 11; Died, October 5, 1859; of Cholera; Scott MacIntosh, Aged 9;

Died, October 5, 1859; of Cholera; "Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me" — Matthew 19:14.

I have, since then, on many a moon-lit night tried to catch yet another glimpse of Anabelle and Scott. But of no avail. I suppose they come out on the anniversary, when the sky is blue and the moon is full.

But alas, an Oct. 5 full moon is almost a quarter of a century away, not until the year 2009, to be exact.

## A strange occurrence

By Sue E. Thomas

As my friends and I tried on our Halloween costumes, I could see

the golden moon peeping through the cracks in our old shed. The shed had been just the appropriate place to try on Halloween costumes, we thought.

Suddenly we were startled as the creaking old door of the shed opened and in walked my two sisters, wanting only to share in the excitement of putting on their costumes with us.

Finally we were ready. As we ran out of the shed I bent over to pick up a large stick. I began waving it in the air as if casting a spell, hideously I laughed (as witches do) and squinted my eyes.

"I'm going to turn you all into toads!" I shouted. My sisters scattered, as did my friends, laughing and screaming. I could see my friends' costumes blowing from behind a couple of trees where they were hiding. I could hear my two sisters snickering from behind the old shed, as I sneaked up behind them and yelled, "BOO!" They only jumped four feet and took off running, laughing hysterically.

I then came up behind my friends and touched one of them on the arm. She screamed and when she did it was a chain reaction, they all began to scream, and ran every which way.

I felt the wind pick up as I noticed a small whirlwind forming, picking up several leaves.

"Hey look!" I shouted. "Ain't that neat?" We all gathered to watch as the small whirlwind twisted the leaves out of sight.

The moon was shining brightly in our yard as we decided to play another game. Everyone got in a small huddle and I began to draw a circle around them while telling them the only way to get out was to say the magic word. As I completed the circle, my sister uttered the word "ghost."

"No, that's not it," I shouted. "Guess again."

She didn't respond to my command. Starting to repeat, I noticed my sister's face was now turning white as though all the blood had been drained from her body. My attention was then turned to one of my friends as I watched her eyes fixed in a glassy stare and her mouth forming a straight line. Everyone was frozen.

I turned to see what they all were staring at and I couldn't believe my eyes. A cold chill ran up my spine. I couldn't feel my legs, it was as though they were weighted down.

"Let's get out of here!" I shrieked to one of my friends. My sister gave a tug at my arm, but I couldn't move. I just stared as the puff of what I thought was smoke suddenly began forming into a figure. As it moved closer and closer it seemed to be pointing in a direction, motioning in a way as to tell us something. But I was not going to find out what!

Suddenly I realized I was alone. When I came to this conclusion, it prompted my zombie-like body to move and that I did. As I crashed through the back door, I could hear my two sisters and my friends trying to convince my disbelieving parents that what they had seen was not their imagination.

Unfortunately, they were unsuccessful. For my parents, being parents as they may, were passing off the sighting as being possibly a car back-firing or leaves burning.

But no matter how they determined what it was we saw, I know in my heart that it was indeed a genuine ghost!

So remember, if you're ever out on a warm autumn night and its getting close to Halloween, prepare yourself for the unexpected ... anything can happen.

## Vigo County ghost

By Michael R. Elmore

On the western edge of Vigo County, across the great river which still bears the honor of an ancient tribal name, up into hills that lie higher than the misnamed strata of Terre Haute, rests a

convent, incongruously European amid the stands of oaks, maples, and sycamores.

These thick tree trunks once were lean witnesses to the presence of redskinned natives, followed by white interlopers, who, in turn, were followed by gentle women garbed in chaste black robes and self-effacing veils and starched cowls. The characteristics of their traditional habit, which had the effect of at once defining the human head by tightly framing it and erasing it by hiding hair, ears and neck, are perhaps essential to the explanation which a skeptic might give to account for the tale which has surfaced and re-surfaced for some years, even up into recent times, among the residents of this holy site.

The tale, omitting here for brevity's sake the various existing versions, runs thus.

A certain figure of authority among these missionary women had commissioned one of her Sisters-in-the-Lord to paint her portrait. Now every artist has his or her peculiar *modus operandi* and it turned out that this particular artist's method consisted in filling in the "cartoon" (portrait artists' technical name for the underlying sketch) by laying in the colors, first on the appropriately dignified background, then on the carefully draped clothing, then on the hands, ever clutching some symbol of office or personal piety.

Only then did this Sister artist turn to filling in the face, saving the most difficult labor for last. Unfortunately, so the tale continues, the noble sitter died before even the first brushstroke blushed the part of the canvas which was empty of a head.

Since her death, claims have been made to the effect that she has been seen wandering the halls of the cloister. She may be dimly perceived at the end of a long dark corridor or suddenly encountered at the turn of a corner or seen kneeling in devotion. Witnesses say she flees, seemingly more frightened than they, as if mortified by the fear of being seen to be still without her face.



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# Girl's dead grandma aids in miracle recovery

FOLKLORE

Community Affairs File

Is OCT 26 1985

## Incredible legends of the Wabash Valley

Seventh in a series

The year was 1932.

The little girl lay in her Terre Haute hospital bed.

Deloris Hart had been seriously injured in a car accident.

Another car had swerved across the center line and into the path of her grandpa's car.

Deloris' great-grandfather was killed instantly. Her grandpa lay close to death in another hospital room.

Deloris was not expected to live. Her scalp had been almost sliced off by flying glass, and she had several additional serious injuries.

Deloris didn't really know where she was. All she knew was that the bed was much bigger than the one at home. The sheets were pulled

tight, and a light blanket was on top of her. She couldn't move very well. Something white was around her arms and legs. She couldn't move her head; it hurt very much.

Then Deloris saw there was a nice-looking woman standing at the foot of her bed. Deloris thought the woman looked a lot like one of the pretty ladies out of her storybooks. A kind of haze shim-

mered around her visitor — but when Deloris tried to speak, the woman put her hand to her lips.

Deloris drifted in and out of consciousness for several days. Men and women in white coats entered the room and left again. But they never seemed to see the nice lady who never moved or spoke.

Deloris eventually got well. Doc-

tors said her recovery was "a miracle."

But no one at the hospital knew who the nice lady with jet-black hair, deep-brown eyes and light complexion was. In fact, doctors and nurses said no one like that worked at the hospital or ever came to the girl's room.

Deloris' father became obsessed with finding out who the woman was.

He later found some old photos in a trunk and showed them to Deloris.

Deloris' eyes shone. She said that was the nice lady who was with her in the hospital.

Impossible, her father said. It

couldn't be. The photo was one of his mother, dead for 20 years.

But the child insisted that that was the woman, the woman who stood by her bed and made her want to live.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** A reporter's attempts to locate family members of Deloris Hart were unsuccessful.

— Rewritten from  
"Haunted Heartland,"  
a collection of more  
than 150 ghost stories and  
supernatural occurrences  
of the Midwest  
published by Stanton  
and Lee Publishers Inc.,  
Madison, Wis.



Folklore

## Act still vivid to Deloris Hart

Deloris Hart, the subject of an Incredible Legends article in Saturday's Tribune-Star, is alive and well in Tucson, Ariz.

"I can still remember that lady standing at the foot of my bed," said



HART

Deloris Hart Sanders, 55, in a telephone interview from her Arizona home. "The way I see it, it was my [dead] grandmother coming back to take care of me."

She was reflecting on an event which has been a legend in Terre Haute for more than half a century.

In 1932 when she was 3 years old, Hart was seriously injured in a car accident at the intersection of Wabash Avenue and 25th Street. Much of her scalp was taken off and she received internal injuries. Her great-grandfather was killed.

She was rushed to the former St. Anthony Hospital and there was serious doubt as to whether the toddler would live. While lying in her hospital bed, the child told nurses she had seen a nice-looking woman standing by her bed. No one had been allowed in her room.

The description she later gave of the mysterious woman matched that of her grandmother — who had been dead 20 years. The girl eventually recovered. Doctors called it a miracle.

"When the story on Deloris came out in the paper, I called her in Tucson," said her mother, Rose Hart, who lives in Garfield Gardens in 12 Points.

"She told me she remembered the accident like it was yesterday," said Hart.

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Covers  
Folklore (wv)

# Ghostly Legends of the Wabash Valley

By Joseph Scott Lane

Artwork by Karen Adams Harden

**O**n a hill north of Brazil is a ghostly lantern that shines in the dead of night, carried by a tormented soul who is searching for a murderer long dead.

To find this hill, one must travel about six miles north out of Brazil on Highway 59 and then take the road toward Carbon. Soon, three hills will come into view. The hill in the middle is known as Spook Light Hill.

At night, if a person watches closely, lights just may appear on the hill. To some unbelievers, this may be nothing more than tricks of the atmosphere. Others claim it is natural gas, which is claimed to glow in the dark, being expelled from elm tree stumps in the fall or spring of the year.

But for those who believe that phantoms wander the earth for eternity, explanations have nothing to do with science. They believe the reasons for the lights are of a grim nature.





*Photo Courtesy of Parke County, Inc.*

Built in 1906, Wilkins Mill Bridge is one of many that make Parke County the "Covered Bridge Capital of the World."

## COVER STORY

### **20 Parke County's Covered Bridges** by REX BUNTAIN

Perhaps the Wabash Valley's greatest legacy, many of the covered bridges of Parke County have stood for more than a century. A historical sketch of the life and times of these coveted treasures.

**25 Electrocution of a covered bridge**

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## FEATURES

### **6 Ghostly Legends of the Wabash Valley** by JOSEPH SCOTT LANE

Some are old, some are new, some are borrowed and they're right on cue – for Halloween. Here are the Valley's very own ghosts and goblins that have been passed down through generations.

### **17 Where the Buffalo Roam** by ANDREW S. CLASE

Home on the range for a herd of buffalo is north of Terre Haute on the Ernest and Mildred Furnas farm. Many Valley residents have enjoyed these magnificent animals for more than 20 years now.

### **36 Tibb's Bridge** by REX BUNTAIN (fiction)

Old Tibb Brush had grown up and old with the nearby covered bridge and they had a lot in common. Time was taking its toll on both.

### **42 Union Hospital Turns 100** by KELLY PORTER

What began as a 20-bed sanitarium has grown into the largest health care complex in the Wabash Valley. Union Hospital turns 100 this year, with plans for another successful century of service.

## DEPARTMENTS

**14 Calendar of Events**

**31 Dining & Entertainment Guide**

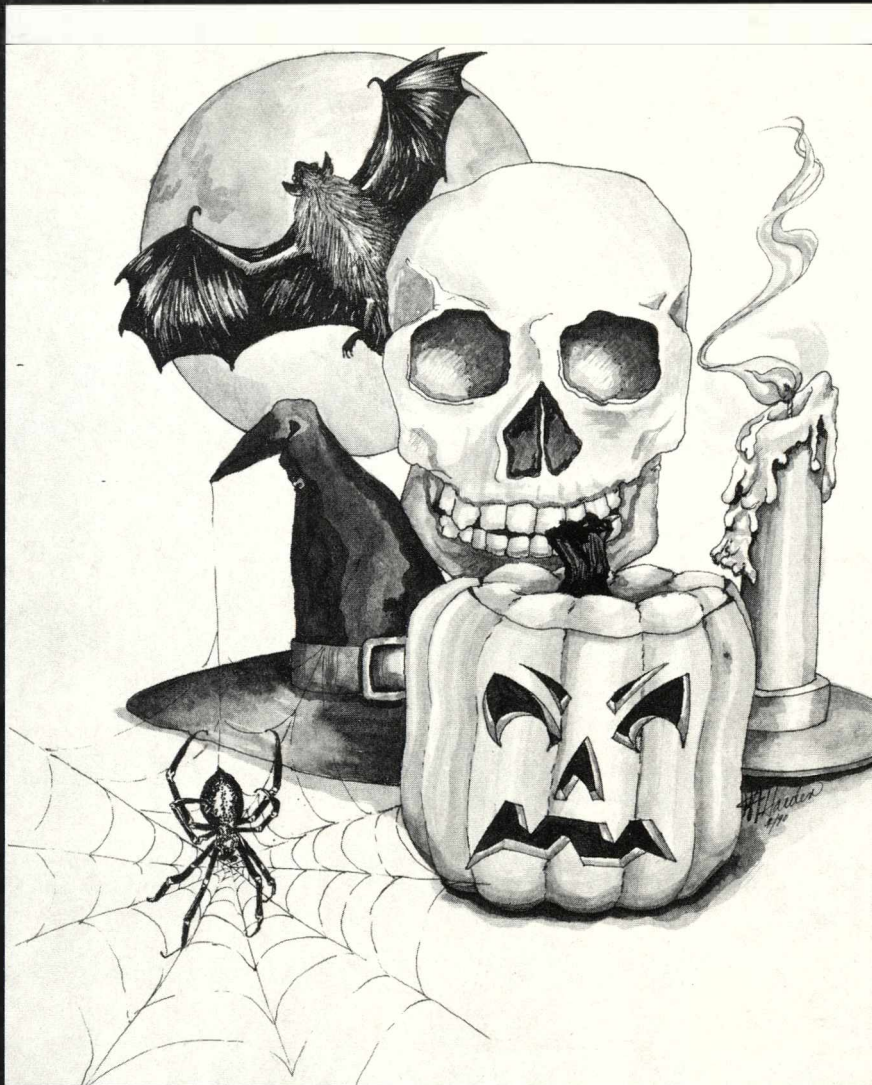


One story holds that during the Civil War, there was a very strict farmer who did not allow his daughter to be courted, as the term applied back then. A soldier or a sailor called on the young lady and the father relented, letting her leave home with the young man.

The daughter never returned home. She was found dead, presumably murdered by her suitor. The father went insane in his search for the killer. To this day, those who have seen the lights claim it is the father's ghost still looking for the killer.

That is not the only tale given for the lights at the hill. Another story concerns a coal miner killed in the area.

A long time ago, a miner who worked in a nearby coal mine either died or was murdered alongside the hill. His men buried him atop the hill, possibly as a



memorial to other miners to be careful. The light is said to be that miner walking to work down the hill and back up to return to his grave each night.

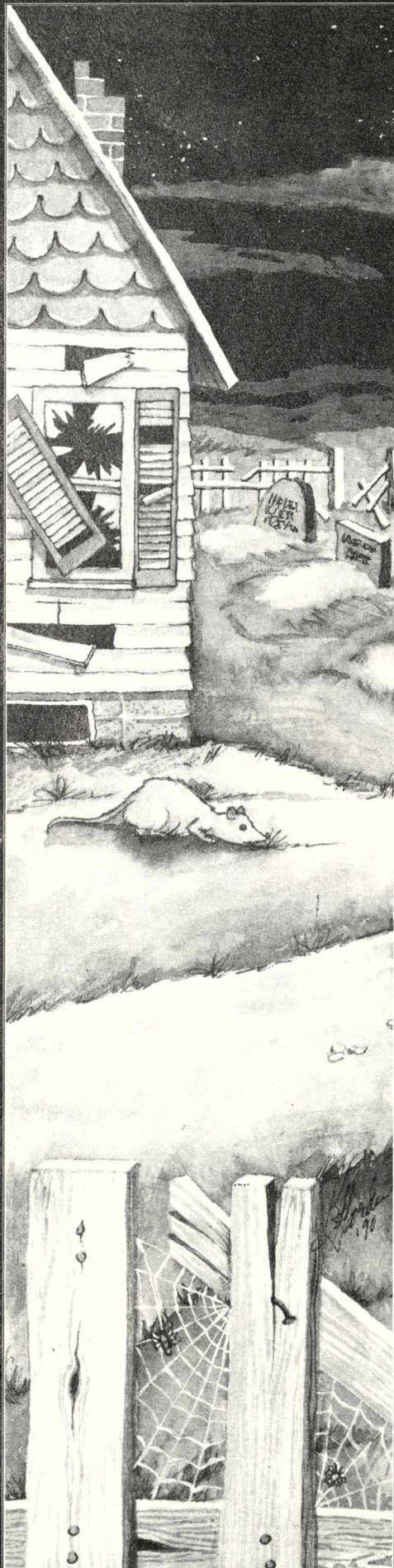
Most ghost stories and tales of terror have their basis in folklore. Robert L. Baker, Chairman of

the English Department at Indiana State University, said folklore is the traditional beliefs or legends of a people. "At one time, all material was passed down by word of mouth," said Baker, who founded ISU's Folklore Archives in 1967.

"People take folklore with them. Folklore is traditional in that it is passed around," Baker said.

The tales are usually anonymous as to the creator and show marks of their handling by the people who are telling the tales, Baker said.





For example, Spook Light Hill near Brazil. It came to be a haunted tale out of the period in which the area was a coal mining community. The story concerned a miner's death. As time went on, Baker said, the story became a buggy accident, then an automobile accident.

"It was told in the context of the time," he said. "Basically, folklore is like religion or philosophy to the people in a region. It is incorporated into the value system."

As for ghosts, Baker said he does not believe in their existence.

While doing a story on Spook Light Hill, Baker and a few others spent several hours late one night looking for the ghostly lights.

Baker saw lights move up and down the hill and change in color from orange to blue. His explanation: "Lights from the cars on Highway 59."

What follows is a sampling of the stories that have been passed around the Wabash Valley over the years. Some have been collected into books such as one by Baker, "Hoosier Folk Legends," and "Legends and Lore," by Juliet O. Snowden of Rockville. Many more tales are on file at the ISM Folklore Archives.

### The Headless Trainman

North of Terre Haute is a stretch of railroad tracks that many say is haunted.

One night, following years of safe travel, a freight train was speeding its way south toward Evansville. Hitting a loose rail, the train went careening wildly off the track, killing the train's conductor and its brakeman.

When the twisted wreckage was cleared, the con-



ductor was found whole but the brakeman's body was found badly twisted and missing its head.

Now, if you walk that stretch of track late at night, it's said you will see a figure walking south along those tracks. The figure is said to hold an old railroad lantern, which it moves back and forth across the tracks. People in the area say it is the brakeman, still looking in vain for his missing head.

### The Face in the Wall

On Fruitridge Avenue in Terre Haute, south of U.S. 40, sits a house that is surrounded by a rock wall. And in that wall it is said there appears the face of a young man who met his death there.

Years ago, as the story goes, a man named Blumberg built a wall of various stones he had gathered from buildings being demolished in town.

His house was situated along a stretch of road popular with young drag racers. One night, two boys with new cars began bragging as to who had the fastest car and before long, they were roaring down Fruitridge at a high rate of speed.

As they neared the rock wall, one of the cars blew a tire and slammed into the rock wall with such velocity that the driver was thrown head first through the windshield. The impact killed the young driver instantly.

Shortly after the funeral, the face of the young man appeared in the wall, as if the force of the collision had imprinted his face in the very rock it hit. Attempts were made to cover up the image, but still it appeared. Finally, the image was scraped off the rock, but a ghostly face is said to be seen in the same spot from time to time. Some claim that if you place your finger in the eye of the face, you will die soon.

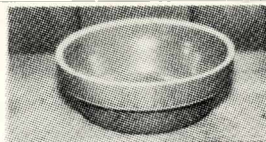




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### The Phone in the Tomb

The fear of dying can be torturous to many. For some, being buried alive is an even bigger fear.

Before the turn of the century, when it was hard to distinguish between coma and death, some hapless people went into the ground only to suffocate upon awakening.

Martin Sheets, a Terre Haute resident, wanted to make sure that mishap never befell him.

Sheets lived on Ohio Street, near the present location of the Goodie Shop. Many of his neighbors thought him a bit eccentric, but, otherwise, he was left alone to do things in the manner he saw fit.

This included planning his funeral. Martin Sheets wanted to make sure he would not be buried alive so he erected a large mausoleum in Highland Lawn Cemetery. Inside it was a coffin with special latches so the coffin to be opened from the inside.

As a final precaution, Sheets had a telephone installed in the tomb so that should he find himself in the situation he most wanted to avoid, he could call someone to come and get him out.

It was said that at the old Indiana Bell Telephone Co., operators were in constant fear that someday the line would begin flashing from Sheets' resting place.

Years passed and Mrs. Sheets passed away due to a heart attack. She supposedly was found lying in bed with her telephone gripped so tightly that the attendants had a hard time breaking her grip. When her body was interned in the mausoleum, its phone was off the hook.

### Blood's Thicker Than Water

In Dana stands a barn alongside a farm house where an accident occurred many years ago that seems to repeat itself.

While under construction, a man fell from a lofty height in the barn, splitting his skull. Since that day, whenever rain water flows over the area, blood appears as if seeping from an open wound.



### Crushed by Love

In Parke County, in the Rocky Fork area, is a very narrow road. Beside that road is a huge, flat rock known as Fallen Rock.

In the early 1900s, two young lovers were having a picnic below the cliffs, which offered shade. It was popular as a picturesque setting.

During the picnic, a large piece of the cliffs broke off and fell on the young lovers, crushing them. Supposedly, their bones remain under the rock.

When the wind blows through the cliffs, there comes a high-pitched sound that is produced by air blowing through holes in the cliffs.

Local legend has it that at night the sound can be heard from quite a distance. It begins slowly from silence and with each passing second grows louder. Some believe it is the screams of the dead lovers, yelling in eternal agony and begging for help.

### 'Till Death Do Us Part

In the old Stevens farmhouse in North Terre Haute it is said a girl met her death in a fiery way on the eve of

her wedding.

It was a cold December afternoon. The young lady was finishing the fitting of her wedding gown when a strong draft sucked the end of it into the fireplace. In seconds the wedding gown was on fire and before the flames could be extinguished, the damage was done. The girl died.

Years later, even up through the 1960s, the image of the young girl roamed the various parts of the house on a regular basis. She banged and stomped to capture attention. It is believed her ghost was looking for a way to exit the home and find her husband to be.

### Room with a Hue

West of Rockville off State Road 36 once was a building called the White Castle, whose construction was attributed to a strange architect from Chicago. What was unusual about the house was a room to the right of the front door that allegedly changed colors each time someone looked in the window. One person would see a light blue color, the next person would see a different color.

### Bellmore's Hill House

About a mile outside Bellmore in Parke County once stood a house, high on a hill, known to the people of the area as Hill House.

So well known was the house that the novel, "Dark Fantastic" by Margaret Echard, a descendent of the original owners, was written about it.

During the construction of the house, layers of brick would be set, only to be knocked off during the night. Tools would also disappear, only to be found in unlikely places.

When the house was finally completed, the family awoke one morning and began to dress for the day. Reaching into their drawers, they found all their clothes missing. They found their clothes inexplicably hanging high up in the huge trees surrounding the house. So high up were some of the clothes they were never retrieved, but remained for years, becoming torn and tattered, as a reminder of the incident. In ensuing years, the family came to accept the presence of spirits, which seemed more interested in playing practical jokes than creating terror.

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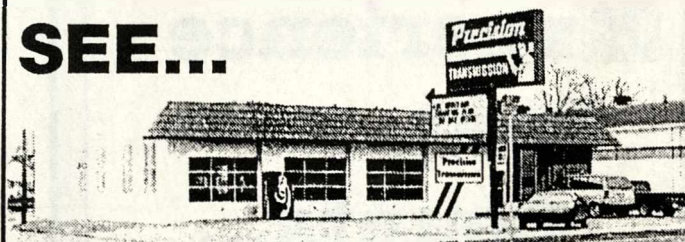
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### Faceless Nun of St. Mary's

Many years ago, in the mid 1800s, there lived a nun at St. Mary-of-the-Woods college.

The nun was renowned for being a great painter and everyone who sat for a portrait would marvel upon its completion at the detail of the work.

"That really looks like me," was the common retort.

The nun would fill in the background, then paint the arms, body and hair of the subject before commencing with work upon the face. The face, she felt, was the most important part of the picture and she would spend many hours painting it.

One day the nun decided to paint her own portrait. She labored over it until the time she was to paint her own face onto the canvas. But before a stroke of paint could be added to the face, the nun became ill and soon died.

A short time later, another nun was praying in the chapel in Foley Hall, where the artist's studio was located. Hearing someone weeping in the studio, she entered to find a nun crying. Asking what was wrong, the sobbing nun turned toward the other

nun, revealing a head with no face. Terrified and realizing what she was encountering could only be a spirit, the frightened nun fled to tell others. By the time she returned with other sisters, the spirit had vanished.

Over the years, the faceless nun was seen from time to time in Foley Hall and other buildings as well. Students have reported seeing a nun in an odd costume, only to find that it was the style of habit worn more than 100 years ago.

In the spring of 1989, Foley Hall was demolished. It is said that spirits are tied to the ground upon which a building stands and not the building itself. Therefore, it is quite possible the Faceless Nun will continue her haunting ways at the college.

### The Preston House

The old Preston House at the corner of Poplar and 13 1/2 streets in Terre Haute (1832 -1987) was surrounded by many tales, one of which is that it was haunted.

The builder of the house was named George Dewees, who came to Terre Haute from the South. He was known as a man with a violent

temper. He didn't like people visiting him and let everyone know it. His wife, Matilda, was just the opposite. She loved to have her friends visit, as her husband didn't like her to leave the house. Matilda eventually filed for divorce, but disappeared before it became final.

The stories at the time were that Dewees killed his wife and bricked her up in a space in the side of the fireplace, but no one could ever prove it. Dewees eventually moved away from the area.

The next owners of the house never tore the fireplace apart to find out if the rumors were true, but reported cold spots near the fireplace and unearthly blue lights seeping through closed windows.

The house was also rumored to be part of the Underground Railroad during the Civil War. Tunnels were said to lead away from the basement and were a hiding place for slaves.

One night, the tunnels had a cave-in, killing a group of slaves. On warm, summer nights, it's said you can hear the hymns of freedom coming from the ground where the slaves are trapped for eternity. •

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